

POST CONFERENCE UPDATE April 27, 2021

NATIONAL, HILL AND DC NEWS:

On April 9th The Biden administration released a budget proposal for discretionary spending levels for fiscal year 2022, which proposes \$1.5 trillion in total discretionary spending – an increase of more than 8 percent, or \$118 billion from FY 2021 base discretionary funding. This includes a 16 percent boost in base non-defense discretionary spending from \$664 billion this year to \$769 billion next year. A full budget proposal with the remaining nine years of the budget window – and the other two-thirds of the budget not covered by appropriations – is expected in the coming weeks. Here is President Biden’s budget request and the Department of Education is on Ps seven and eight. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/FY2022-Discretionary-Request.pdf>

On April 21st Chairman Robert C. “Bobby” Scott (VA-03) and Ranking Member Virginia Foxx (NC-05) released the following statement announcing the start of a bipartisan effort to reauthorize the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), which is the nation’s primary federal workforce development legislation. The Committee held a bipartisan roundtable to discuss opportunities to strengthen WIOA and confront the challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

“America’s workforce development programs are critical to the success of workers, employers, and our economy. Committee Democrats and Republicans are working together to advance a bipartisan reauthorization of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act that offers workers the opportunity to gain in-demand skills and provides employers the talent they need to succeed and grow. We look forward to holding a series of public hearings to advance this important work and continue the tradition of bipartisan support for workforce development programs.”

The House passed a bill this past Thursday that would make Washington, DC the 51st state, but the bill’s journey is far from over. Democrats held together to vote in favor of D.C. statehood, and no Republicans crossed party lines to join them. It marked a day of celebration for some, but advocates know there’s work to do to convince a gridlocked Senate to pass the bill.

Taryn Mackenzie Williams has been nominated as the Assistant Secretary of Disability Employment Policy at DOL. Currently, she is the managing director for the Poverty to Prosperity Program at American Progress, which works on progressive policies focused on a broad range of anti-poverty strategies. Before joining American Progress, Williams

worked at the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) at the U.S. Department of Labor. At ODEP, she worked on a variety of issues related to education, workforce policy, Social Security, Medicaid, and civil rights. In her most recent role as director of youth policy, Williams led agency efforts to coordinate education and employment policy in support of improved labor force outcomes for disabled youth. From 2014 through 2016, Williams served as ODEP's chief of staff. She also served on detail assignments as associate director for public engagement and liaison to the disability community at the White House from 2014 through 2015 and as a policy adviser on the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions from 2012 through 2013.

DIRECTOR UPDATES:

Sandra Miller has left Delaware Blind and was hired by GWU and is on their NTACTION team. Debbie Talley is the acting Director. Her email is as follows: deborah.talley@delaware.gov

RSA NEWS:

RSA announced the publication of joint Departments of Education and Labor guidance on the implementation of the provisions of section 511 of the Rehabilitation Act. As you know, section 511 was created by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) in 2014 and placed new limitations on the payment of subminimum wages under section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). RSA worked with the Department of Labor Wage and Hour Division (WHD) to develop this set of questions and answers to address many of the basic questions vocational rehabilitation (VR) agencies and Section 14(c) certificate holders have about the section 511 requirements.

You can find the FAQs on the RSA website at the following link: <https://rsa.ed.gov/sub-regulatory-guidance/rsa-frequently-asked-questions-section-511-rehabilitation-act-limitations>.

You may also wish to visit WHD's webpage to explore more about the Department of Labor's section 511 resources. If you have questions, contact your State liaison

On April 13th RSA released a Notice of Final Priority (NFP) and Notice Inviting Applications (NIA) for Activities for Underserved Populations, Assistance Listing Number 84.315C, published in the Federal Register. The program is designed to improve the quality, access, delivery of services, and the outcomes of those services under the Rehabilitation Act, especially services provided to individuals with disabilities from minority backgrounds, and to increase the capacity of minority institutions and Indian tribes to participate in activities funded under the Act. This priority funds a five-year cooperative agreement to focus on changing the status quo and improving outcomes for individuals with disabilities from minority backgrounds through providing cultural competency training and promoting application for vocational rehabilitation (VR) leadership and staff, collecting and analyzing relevant data, evaluating cultural

competency training, and disseminating evidence-based practices. **Applications are due June 14, 2021.**

Links to Notices via RSA.ED.GOV:

NFP: <https://www.federalregister.gov/public-inspection/2021-07524/final-priority-and-requirements-activities-for-traditionally-underserved-populations>

NIA: <https://www.federalregister.gov/public-inspection/2021-07525/applications-for-new-awards-activities-for-traditionally-underserved-populations>

Application Package via Grants.gov:

<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppld=332803>

Pre-Application Information:

All Pre-Application information is available at RSA's National Clearinghouse of Rehabilitation Training Materials (NCRTM): <https://ncrtm.ed.gov/RSAGrantInfo.aspx>. Please be sure to review the Pre-Application slide deck.

A Pre-Application teleconference is scheduled for Tuesday, May 4, 2021 from 2:00-3:00 PM Eastern Time.

You can submit questions in advance at: 84.315C@ed.gov.

For further information, please contact Kristen Rhinehart-Fernandez, competition manager, at: 84.315C@ed.gov.

In response to requests for information regarding the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VR) program maintenance of effort (MOE) requirement, RSA has developed an MOE presentation that is now available at:

[https://rsa.ed.gov/sites/default/files/VR%20MOE%20Overview%20\(04.13.2021\).potx](https://rsa.ed.gov/sites/default/files/VR%20MOE%20Overview%20(04.13.2021).potx)

The MOE presentation consists of four (4) parts:

1. MOE Basics;
2. MOE Deficit Determination, Penalties, and Waivers;
3. Reallotment; and
4. Program Considerations.
- 5.

If you have any questions after reviewing the information, contact the RSA Financial Management Specialist assigned to your agency.

Also, on April 13, 2021, the Department of Education issued Grant Policy Bulletin 21-01 that implements a revision codified in 2 CFR § 200.344 of the *Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards* (the Uniform Guidance) that extends the grant closeout liquidation period, i.e., the period immediately following the end date of the period of performance, from 90 calendar days to 120 calendar days for all active grants. A copy of the Grant Bulletin is attached for your convenience.

Please contact the RSA Financial Management Specialist assigned to your State if you have any questions.

WORKFORCE INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SUPPORT CENTER:

Our colleague association **the National Association of State Workforce Agencies (or NASWA)** through its **Workforce Information Technology Support Center (Workforce ITSC)** is broadly collecting information around WIOA partners' technology software and systems.

Workforce ITSC is a federally-funded initiative supporting state WIOA partners as they work to implement integrated technology solutions by sharing resources through online tools, delivering learning services, and coordinating technical assistance. The information in question is used to build searchable, online **State Technology Profiles** that help inform state technology decision-making and raise awareness of available options. State workforce program colleagues may already have outreached to you to coordinate a response. Vocation Rehabilitation state agency directors and their staff have access to all Workforce ITSC resources at no cost, and can explore the information and profiles. For more information and to access the Workforce ITSC State Workforce Technology Profiles tool, visit the State Technology Profiles page on Workforce ITSC's website.

In addition, Workforce ITSC is collecting information around innovative ways technology is being used to deliver virtual services across all WIOA partners. These are hosted in a tool titled **Solutions Marketplace**. Workforce ITSC staff will set up a short interview with you (or your staff) and draft a brief one-pager highlighting such practices. One-pagers are published on the Solutions Marketplace once you approve. You can find examples at <https://www.naswa.org/witsc/online-tools/solutions-marketplace/state-workforce-technology-practices> (NASWA login required). **If you would like the opportunity to share your state innovative practices, you may contact Workforce ITSC directly at witsc@naswa.org for more information.**

CSAVR NEWS:

The CSAVR Operations & Personnel Committee co-chaired by Cynthia Speight (NC-B) and Kristen Mackey (AZ-C) is working to compile information about VR salaries so that you can refer to this information. Thanks to the Regional Representatives who shared the original request with their respective peers and to those Directors who have responded. You can see the responses which have been submitted to date. The

Committee is hoping to get more input. If your agency has not submitted the requested information, please do so no later than 4/30/21 and thank you.

Also, the Committee sent to Directors a recruitment and retention survey. The purpose is to identify effective practices for recruiting and retention which we know is a challenge. The time for responding to the survey has been extended to 4/30/21. If you have not responded, please do so and thanks.

NEW TRAINING OPPORTUNITY ON SELF EMPLOYMENT:

The National Center on Self-Employment, Business Ownership, and Telecommuting is a national project funded in 2020 to develop and provide training for Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Counselors and VR professionals. The goal is to increase self-employment and telecommuting access and outcomes by building the knowledge and skills of rehabilitation professionals. Griffin-Hammis Associates (GHA) is the recipient of this Rehabilitation Service of Administration's Innovative Rehabilitation Training grant. One of the activities is to provide training through an annual webinar series.

Join the Center when it kicks off the series on 4/26 at 2pm ET. This webinar will cover the RSA Innovative Training grant and discuss the project objectives. Hear from GHA's Executive Director, Beth Keeton and Project Coordinator, Ashlea Lantz. During this webinar, business owner, Em Hillman, will share her story on moving from a workshop to self-employment success.

Register online at: <https://centeronselfemployment.org/training/webcasts/>

RESEARCH NEWS, CONFERENCE, REPORTS, WEBINARS, ETC.:

The latest issue of NASMHPD's newsletter has a piece about Illinois VR/MH IPS. Also, here is a link to a LEAD webinar video featuring Bob Drake, Missouri VR and MH staff and Illinois as well. To read these articles and more, go to: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k8R2zTyiGpY>

The Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Employment for People Who are Blind or Have Low Vision (90RTEM0007) has created several video resources to educate employers about hiring and working with employees who are blind or who have low vision. Blindness Basics for Employers is a two-part video series that provides foundational knowledge about blindness and low vision, such as facts about the eye and vision, interacting with individuals with visual disabilities, and strategies and technology used by these individuals. The Inquiring Minds Video Series features 13 short videos answering some of the questions employers might have when considering whether to hire an applicant with blindness or low vision, such as common barriers and solutions, legal considerations, and working with vocational rehabilitation.

The Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Improving Employment Outcomes for Individuals with Psychiatric Disabilities (90RTEM0004) will host a webinar, Ask Me Anything About Employment: The Cost of Benefits, May 7th, 12-1 pm ET. In this interactive session, guest experts will answer participants' questions about Social Security Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income, working while receiving these benefits, and how much a person can earn and still receive financial support and medical benefits. Registration is free and required.

The Temple University Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Community Living and Participation of People with Serious Mental Illness (TU Collaborative) (90RTCP0001) is conducting a survey to understand the role and contributions of occupational therapists (OTs) in early intervention in psychosis (EIP) programs. Participants must be senior leaders working in EIP programs who have extensive knowledge of program policies, practices, and procedures. Senior leaders can complete the survey even if their program does not include OT services. Participants who complete the survey will be entered into a raffle for a \$300 gift card, one of two \$100, and one of 10 \$50 gift cards. Contact john.suarez@temple.edu for more information.

On Tuesday, June 15, the U.S. Social Security Administration (SSA) will be hosting a virtual event from 9:45 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. to discuss lessons learned about which policies, programs, and other operational decisions could provide effective supports for disability beneficiaries who want to work. “Lessons Learned from SSA Demonstrations: A State-of-the-Science Meeting” will bring together more than 30 researchers and experts in disability and social policy. Registration is free and open to the public. More information about the event and participating presenters is available online

Mathematica Medicaid experts worked with Senator Maggie Hassan’s (D-NH) office to help estimate the net costs of extending access to home- and community-based services (HCBS) to Medicaid beneficiaries who want these supports and are unable to receive them because of program barriers and long waiting lists. This work was done to support draft legislation for the HCBS Access Act, recently released for public comment. HCBS in Medicaid are crucial to individuals and families in need of personal assistance, helping them to remain in their homes and avoid entering institutional care.

The Langston University Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Research and Capacity Building for Minority Entities (90RTST0001) released a report, A Multisite Evaluation of an Emerging Institutional Research Capacity Building and Infrastructure Model for Advancing the Science on Disability/Health and Rehabilitation Research Capacity Building at Minority-Serving Institutions (PDF). The model was tested at five minority-serving institutions and results showed the program could help minority-serving institutions respond to increases in federal research and development investments and spur further growth in these institutions as scientific knowledge creators.

Join for a webinar about the Pathways to Work Evidence Clearinghouse on Thursday, April 29, from 3:00 p.m.– 4:00 p.m. (ET). The webinar highlights ways TANF administrators and other service providers can find and use information on the Pathways Clearinghouse website about evidence-based interventions and their implementation details. Since its launch in 2020, the Pathways Clearinghouse has been busy adding new features and information including: implementation details for over 50 interventions that have favorable findings, reviews of additional studies and interventions, enhanced information about populations served, and much more! The Pathways Clearinghouse is a resource funded by the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE) in the Administration for Children & Families. Designed to meet the needs of employment service providers and TANF administrators and support the use of evidence-based practices, the Pathways Clearinghouse provides trustworthy, accessible information about what works to help job seekers with low incomes find and sustain employment. During this discussion, a panel of experts will:

- Identify why and how the Pathways Clearinghouse website is relevant and useful to you;
- Demonstrate the new website features; and
- Explore the website’s rich information on how evidence-based interventions were implemented.

The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) at the National Institutes of Health posted a video of the recent event, NIMH Expert Dr. Mary Rooney Discusses Bipolar Disorder in Adolescents and Young Adults. Mary Rooney, PhD, chief of the Child and Adolescent Psychosocial Interventions Research Program at NIMH, provided an overview of the signs, symptoms, diagnosis, and treatments for bipolar disorder in adolescents and young adults. She also discussed some of the challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic has presented for individuals living with bipolar disorder. The video includes ASL interpretation and captions, along with a full transcript of the content.

The Greening of the World of Work - A Look at its Impact on Occupations:

New and emerging (N&E) occupations may be incorporated at some point into the Occupational Information Network (O*NET) Standard Occupational Coding (SOC) system taxonomy. For these reasons, emerging and evolving green jobs are studied to evaluate their long-term impact on the job market.

8 Expert Predictions on How and When Business Will Return to Normal in 2021:

Resources identified with The Adapting to Change theme address the workforce challenges with changes in policy, procedures, and processes.

On Friday, May 7, 2021 at 12:00 pm ET, The Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation at Boston University

National Resource Center on Employment will present The Cost of Benefits: Q&A with guest experts, Michael Dalto & Melody Riefer, MSW. Learn: What is the difference between Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI)? Can a person who gets SSDI or SSI get ahead financially by working? Can they keep their SSDI and SSI? Can they keep the medical benefits that come along with SSDI and SSI? What happens if a person earns enough to stop SSDI or SSI? These and other questions will be answered by our guest experts, Michael Dalto & Melody Riefer, MSW during our next Q&A webinar. Register for the FREE webinar now!

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/ask-me-anything-about-employment-webinar-the-cost-of-benefits-tickets-147639849765>

Tax Incentives for Employers and Individuals with Disabilities:

https://disability.workforcegps.org/resources/2018/02/05/18/38/Disability_Focus_Employer_Tax_Incentives: The year-end clock is ticking - it is a good time to get tax records in order. Businesses accommodating or hiring employees with disabilities may qualify for tax credits and deductions. For individuals with disabilities, there is information on taxes and tax preparation, as well as opportunities to contribute to a tax-advantaged savings account to fund disability expenses. This resource page includes more information about these different financial incentives.

U.S. Department of Labor selects seven states to participate in its initiative to improve employment outcomes for people with mental health conditions: The Office of Disability Employment Policy selected seven states to participate in its Advancing State Policy Integration for Recovery and Employment initiative to align state policy and funding to increase competitive integrated employment for individuals with mental health conditions. The initiative will provide Florida, Indiana, Iowa, Minnesota, Oklahoma, Virginia and Wisconsin with tailored and targeted technical assistance. This assistance includes expertise to help each state create and implement strategic plans that encompass multiple systems, including mental/behavioral health, Medicaid, vocational rehabilitation, and workforce and education. States will develop and implement their strategic plans in consultation with their state's key mental health advocacy organizations.

<https://www.dol.gov/newsroom/releases/odep/odep20210414>

Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) Procedural Guidance from the U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration

Training and Employment Guidance Letter Number 16-20 / March 31, 2021

https://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/corr_doc.cfm?docn=8395 The purpose of this training and employment guidance letter is to provide updated procedural guidance to state workforce agencies (SWA) on the WOTC certification process. This guidance and the materials and forms it discusses supersede the guidance outlined in the Third Edition of

Employment and Training Administration (ETA) Handbook No. 408, published in November 2002, and its August 2009 Addendum.

Change 1 to Training and Employment Guidance Letter No. 06-20, *Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) Funding Allotments for Fiscal Year 2021*

U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration

Training and Employment Guidance Letter Number 06-20, Change 1

March 31, 2021

https://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/corr_doc.cfm?DOCN=8390

This Change 1 to the training and employment guidance letter (TEGL) 06-20 conveys the remaining balance for WOTC and explains application requirements for State Workforce Agencies (SWA) based on funding appropriated for Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 through September 30, 2022. Additionally, this TEGL announces 12 states selected to receive additional FY 2021 backlog funding and provides instructions to those states on how to proceed. The remainder of TEGL No. 06-20 remains the same.

Checklist for a Mentally Healthy Workplace from the Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion (EARN): This resource summarizes strategies that can help employers foster a mental health-friendly workplace. These strategies align with the “4 A’s of a Mental Health-Friendly Workplace” employer framework. This framework, a key part of EARN’s Mental Health Toolkit, includes building “Awareness” and a supportive culture, providing “Accommodations” to employees, offering employee “Assistance” and ensuring “Access” to mental health treatment. Access the [checklist](https://askearn.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/EARN2020-Checklist_Mentally_Healthy_Workplaces.pdf) or the [Mental Health Toolkit](https://askearn.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/EARN2020-Checklist_Mentally_Healthy_Workplaces.pdf). https://askearn.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/EARN2020-Checklist_Mentally_Healthy_Workplaces.pdf

Videos on Blindness/Low Vision for Employers from the Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Employment for People Who are Blind or Have Low Vision: The Center on Employment for People Who are Blind or Have Low Vision as created several video resources to educate employers about hiring and working with employees who are blind or who have low vision. [Blindness Basics for Employers](https://www.blind.msstate.edu/research/current) is a two-part video series that provides foundational knowledge about blindness and low vision, such as facts about the eye and vision, interacting with individuals with visual disabilities, and strategies and technology used by these individuals. The [Inquiring Minds Video Series](https://www.blind.msstate.edu/research/current) features 13 short videos answering some of the questions employers might have when considering whether to hire an applicant with blindness or low vision, such as common barriers and solutions, legal considerations, and working with vocational rehabilitation. <https://www.blind.msstate.edu/research/current>

COVID 19 NEWS:

As part of a shared commitment to President Biden's National Strategy and Executive Order to ensure an equitable COVID-19 response, the Office for Civil Rights (OCR), the Administration for Community Living (ACL), and the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) have published several new resources to help states, vaccination providers, and others leading COVID-19 response activities improve access to vaccines for people with disabilities and older adults. These resources clarify legal requirements, illustrate some of the barriers to vaccine access faced by people with disabilities and older people, and provide strategies – and examples of how the aging and disability network can help employ them – to ensure accessibility.

The Office for Civil Rights released new guidance outlining legal standards under the federal civil rights laws prohibiting disability discrimination and providing concrete examples of the application of the legal standards in the context of COVID-19 vaccine programs and how to implement them. OCR also issued a fact sheet setting out specific steps that those involved in the planning and distribution of vaccines to combat the COVID-19 pandemic may wish to consider to promote compliance with disability rights laws and provide access to vaccination programs for people with disabilities. Earlier COVID-19 guidance from OCR addressed civil rights protections prohibiting discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, and civil rights of persons with limited English proficiency.

The Administration for Community Living has compiled strategies and best practices for helping people with disabilities and older adults access COVID-19 vaccines. This compendium provides creative approaches to outreach and education, appointment facilitation, ensuring website and vaccination site accessibility, and reaching people who cannot be vaccinated outside of their homes. Also included are examples of how the aging and disability network have collaborated with state agencies at virtually every stage of the vaccination process to ensure access for people with disabilities and older adults.

As trusted members of their communities, the aging and disability network offers unique and specialized knowledge of the needs of the people they serve, as well as established channels for reaching them. Through a partnership between ACL and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the network will receive nearly \$100 million to assist with scheduling of, and travel, to appointments, direct support services, and more. The grants also will enable the aging and disability network to identify people who cannot travel to vaccination sites and to assist local authorities with improving vaccine access for people with disabilities and older adults. Funding is being distributed now, with initial grants issued last week.

Finally, the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation published an issue brief on the prevalence and characteristics of older adults who are normally unable to leave home unassisted and for whom leaving the house would take considerable and

taxing effort. This will inform the development of interventions to increase vaccination of this population, which has proven challenging to reach thus far.

ICI State Systems staffers Jennifer Bose and Jean Winsor authored a State Agency Promising Practice on Ohio's Technology First policy. The brief describes how an executive order made Ohio the first state to have a Technology First initiative, which is an effort to expand access to assistive technology and remote supports for people with intellectual and development disabilities (IDD). This Technology First initiative ensured that those individuals eligible for services through Department of Developmental Disabilities had increased opportunities to live, work, and thrive in their homes and communities during the Covid-19 pandemic through state-of-the-art planning, innovative technology, and supports.

[Read the brief online.](#)

The COVID-19 pandemic sparked extraordinary, unprecedented unemployment rates that highlighted inequities nationwide. Youth unemployment numbers spiked, and because employment provides young people essential opportunities to learn job skills, assess what type of jobs they like, and connect with employers, the consequences go far beyond financial constraints.

That's the backdrop of a new, yearlong study released today by Mathematica and the Schultz Family Foundation. The new findings highlight just how disruptive COVID-19 has been to young people's access to jobs and what groups of youth ages 16 to 24 have been most directly affected by unemployment brought on by the pandemic. To further bring these findings to life, Mathematica created powerful data visualizations to put these numbers in the context of the Great Recession and highlight youth unemployment impacts and inequities during the COVID-19 pandemic and economic recovery.

Among the key findings:

- Rising unemployment during the early stages of the pandemic was particularly pronounced among female youth and Asian youth—groups that historically have had lower than average unemployment rates among young people during typical recessions.
- Beginning in May and continuing through September 2020, the economy recovered partially as some businesses re-opened and others brought back employees into seasonal jobs. During that time, unemployment declined particularly among white male youth but did not among Black male youth, Asian American male and female youth, and Hispanic male and female youth, unemployment remained around 20 percent until September.
- Youth unemployment more than tripled at the start of the pandemic, jumping from 7.8 percent in February 2020 to 27.4 percent in April. During the Great Recession, youth unemployment peaked at 19.5 percent in April 2010.
- Youth unemployment was particularly concentrated in areas where states introduced stricter containment measures in response to COVID-19 infections.

[READ MORE](#)

New Legal Guidance and Resources to Ensure and Expand COVID-19 Vaccine Access: The Administration for Community Living (ACL), the Office for Civil Rights (OCR), and the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) at the Department of Health and Human Services have published several new resources to help states, vaccination providers, and others leading COVID-19 response activities improve access to vaccines for people with disabilities and older adults. These resources clarify legal requirements, illustrate some of the barriers to vaccine access faced by people with disabilities and older people, and provide strategies to ensure accessibility, with examples of how the aging and disability network can help employ them to ensure accessibility.

The State Exchange on employment and Disability (SEED) COVID-19 Policy Collaborative for an Inclusive Recovery is exploring the pandemic's impact on the employment of people with disabilities and ways to ensure state and local policy is disability inclusive i.e., aligned with disability and civil rights laws and regulations. The Collaborative is focusing on three topic areas:

- 1) Return to the Workplace: Inclusive Safety and Health Policies
- 2) Workforce Retention: Inclusive Vaccinations and Mental Health Policies
- 3) Preparing for Work: Inclusive Workforce Readiness Programs and Initiatives

As individuals begin to return to the workplace and employers look to retain their workforces, the design and implementation of inclusive mental health is especially important. This background brief:

- Describes the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on people's mental health in general and on the mental health of workers in particular;
- Reviews COVID-19 related federal and state policy guidance and pending legislation related to mental health and employment; and
- Identifies disability-inclusive policy options state and local policymakers may want to consider.

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As individuals begin to return to the workplace and employers look to retain their workforces, the design and implementation of vaccination policies that are inclusive of people with disabilities is especially important. This background brief:

- Highlights the significance of vaccinations in enabling workers to return to the workplace and promoting worker retention;
- Reviews federal and state policy guidance and pending legislation related to vaccinations; and
- Identifies disability-inclusive policy options that state and local policymakers may want to consider.

U.S. News: Long COVID Sufferers Are Seeking Disability Benefits. Will They Change the System?

<https://www-usnews-com.cdn.ampproject.org/c/s/www.usnews.com/news/health-news/articles/2021-04-15/covid-long-haulers-could-change-the-disability-system?context=amp>

The NIDILRR grantee community responded early to the COVID-19 pandemic by creating or curating a wide array of resources for staying healthy, safe community participation, and inclusive telework and remote learning. For more than a year we have collected and catalogued the webinars, journal articles, reports, factsheets, infographics, explainer videos, and more in our Spotlight blog. Now we've moved this to a special, permanent collection on our website. You can explore more than 100 items by title, disability, life area, and product type, or use the filters to narrow the list down to the topics that are most important to you. We expect this collection to continue growing as we learn more about the impact of COVID-19 on people with disabilities, health care and vaccine access, and the importance of telework and telehealth. These products and materials from the wider disability and rehabilitation research community are also indexed in the REHABDATA database.

RECENT ARTICLES:

Alaie, I., R. Ssegonja, A. Philipson, A.-L. von Knorring, M. Möller, L. von Knorring, M. Ramklint, et al. **“Adolescent Depression, Early Psychiatric Comorbidities, and Adulthood Welfare Burden: A 25-Year Longitudinal Cohort Study.”** SOCIAL PSYCHIATRY AND PSYCHIATRIC EPIDEMIOLOGY, 2021, online ahead of print.

Bin Sayeed, Muhammad S., Grace Joshy, Ellie Paige, Emily Banks, and Rosemary Korda. **“Cardiovascular Disease Subtypes, Physical Disability and Workforce Participation: A Cross-Sectional Study of 163,562 Middle-Aged Australians.”** PLOS ONE, vol. 16, no. 4, 2021, online only.

Brongers, Kor A., Tialda Hoekstra, Pepijn D.D.M. Roelofs, and Sandra Brouwer. **“Prevalence, Types, and Combinations of Multiple Problems Among Recipients of**

Work Disability Benefits. DISABILITY AND REHABILITATION, 2021, online ahead of print.

Cherry, Elizabeth, Roger J. Stancliffe, Eric Emerson, and Renata Tichá. **“Policy Implications, Eligibility, and Demographic Characteristics of People with Intellectual Disability Who Access Self-Directed Funding in the United States.”** INTELLECTUAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES, vol. 59, no. 2, 2021, pp. 123–140.

Djela, M. **“Change of Autism Narrative Is Required to Improve Employment of Autistic People.”** ADVANCES IN AUTISM, 2021, online only.

Dobransky, Kerry, and Eszter Hargittai. **“Piercing the Pandemic Social Bubble: Disability and Social Media Use About COVID-19.”** AMERICAN BEHAVIORAL SCIENTIST, 2021, online ahead of print.

Haeder, Simon F., Steven M. Sylvester, and Timothy Callaghan. **“Lingering Legacies: Public Attitudes About Medicaid Beneficiaries and Work Requirements.”** JOURNAL OF HEALTH POLITICS, Policy and Law, vol. 46, no. 2, 2021, pp. 305–355.

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SWOODERSON@CSAVR.ORG
STEPHEN A. WOODERSON
CEO – CSAVR
OFFICE PHONE 301-519-8023
CELL 202-604-7880

